

eVolume

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CONTEMPORARY INSTRUCTIONAL CONCEPTS

How to Create a Superb Course Management System on a Shoestring Budget

Installation Guide for Moodle

CONTEMPORARY INSTRUCTIONAL CONCEPTS

How to Create a Superb Course Management System on a Shoestring Budget

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CIC

Contemporary
Instructional
Concepts

"We'll save you from the CMS abyss!"

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Which installation is best for you?

This chapter will explain how to select the best Moodle installation for your specific needs.

This chapter will cover the two types of installations: institutional and private. You will be able to understand which installation is best for your needs. You will also see what you will need to do the chosen type of installation.

ICON KEY

 Valuable information

 Test your knowledge


 Video tutorial.

Institutional Installation

The icons in this chart show you that you can “click” on each one to see the keyed information. Their links will take you to a web site on the

Internet. Be certain you’re connected.

Universities and Corporations

Universities and corporations are finding out that the expensive CMS systems are not working out. A study done by Humboldt State University, for example, showed that thousands of dollars could be saved by replacing their present system with the free, open-source Moodle package. 

As you can see, Moodle was shown to be the favorite of both faculty and students.

Why Moodle?

Cost is just one (important) factor that can lead you to choose to install it over the high-priced packages out there. However, the popularity factor (mentioned above) is probably the most

salient argument in favor of installing Moodle on your university or corporate server. What about the technical angle? Is Moodle big enough to handle the “big needs” of a major university or the training needs of a major corporation?

Moodle was the most popular at Humboldt State, and it’s being used at other universities and colleges as well: [Arizona State University](#), [Holmes Institute](#), [Red River College](#), [Universidad Gerardo Barrios](#), and the [University of Dubuque](#) have all installed the Moodle.

In addition, here are some of the major corporations who have adopted Moodle: [Classic Custom Vacations](#), [Pakunui Technology](#), and the [Florida Institute of Animal Art](#) all have Moodle CMS.

Ready for a quiz?

Let’s see if you remember some of the major factors when deciding whether you should choose Moodle: [✍](#)

If you scored well, then perhaps you’re ready to see how you can easily install a full Moodle application on your server and see if your Internet Technicians like it as much as people say they will! If you need the abilities of a pro to come to “your house” and give a demo of Moodle (complete with the online course in Critical Thinking that he uses), then [email](#) Mr. Jim Musgrave at Contemporary Instructional Concepts.

Ready for the Installation?

If you’re now convinced that you want to install the free, open-source package of Moodle CMS, then you can view a little tutorial Jim has created: [📄](#)

Moodle for the homeschoolers and charter schools—it's about time!

One of the major problems with the “technology boom” of the 80s and 90s was the fact that many folks had to contend with the “high end,” corporate sales jobs done to local school districts and colleges. Some have even argued that we were also “conned” at the national level, but I won’t go into that. As a result, public schools attempted to “control” high enrollments by turning to computer-organized lessons and expensive course management systems run by *big corporations* hiding behind very *small* software systems. What happened? More parents are today pulling their kids out of public schools, and the former public school venue has begun turning more toward a charter school prototype.


These grassroots people want what’s best for their students, but they also want what’s within a budget that is not as “fat” as the public schools used to be before all the cut-backs. We saw a lot of waste in the public sector, for many years, and now it’s time for parents and teachers on the local level to “fight back” against the “big business” mentality in our education system. Do you want to see what a grassroots movement looks like? Visit the sites that Moodle now occupies:



How does Moodle fit the need?

Moodle is best for homeschool and cost-saving school districts because it is an open-source (free) application that takes little time to install, and even less time to run. Teachers enjoy using it because it was created *by* online teachers, *for* online teachers. In fact, the [Moodle.org web site](#) provides all the free technical assistance and creative ideas one needs to run this CMS!

One does not expect the average homeschool mom or dad, or even the local charter school, to be able to install a complete Moodle CMS and get it running to suit their needs. However, Jim Musgrave, at [Contemporary Instructional Concepts](#), can do the job to your satisfaction—before

he ever gets paid! That's right, CIC will install a full application of Moodle on a server with your domain name on it, and he'll just "turn over the driving keys" to you. 

All Jim asks is that you first take a "test drive" of the Moodle installation at his web site before you make your decision. If you like what he has, then the decision is yours. To make things a little easier, here's a chart comparing Moodle to the biggest seller of today's CMS systems, Blackboard.

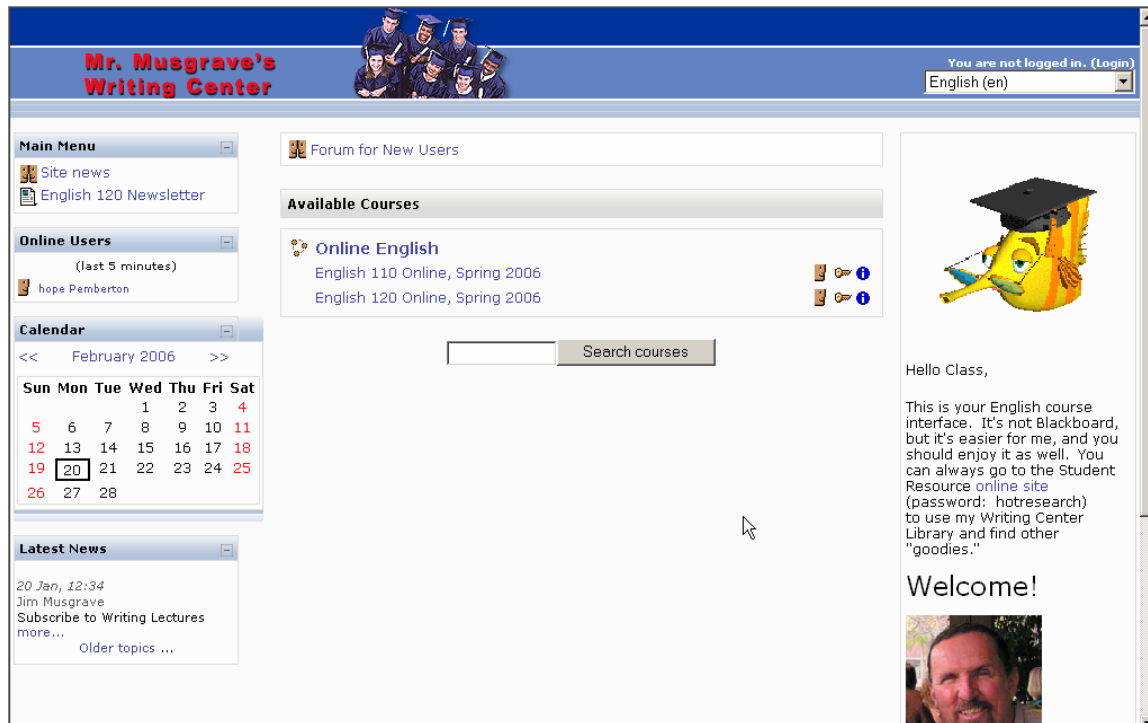


Figure 2.1 Contemporary Instructional Concepts Moodle main page

The Project*

- Compared Moodle 1.3.2* to Blackboard™ 6.0 Basic Edition using a course previously taught in the classroom for 20+ years
- First experience using Moodle for both the developer and the facilitator
- First fully-online Moodle course in the CSU
- Facilitator's first experience teaching online
- Students' first time in a fully-online course
- 35 students thought they were enrolling in a face-to-face course
- Random assignment the first day of class: half in Blackboard, half in Moodle

*It should be noted that Moodle has gone through many revisions since then. The current version is 1.5.3

Features Used

- Electronic assignment submissions
- Virtual areas for group work
- Self-assessment quizzes and online testing
- Sequential learning objects (Moodle only)
- Embedded ShockWave Flash (.swf) files
- Tracked specific student activity (Moodle only)
- Poll (Moodle only)
- Glossary (Moodle only)
- Survey
- Discussion forums
- Links to external Web pages

What the Course Looks Like

Moodle <http://learn.humboldt.edu>

- Blocks in three columns
- Course content column in the center
- Course content is organized by “week”, “topic,” or “social”

Blackboard <http://blackboard.humboldt.edu>

- Navigation buttons down the left side
- Opening at the announcement area

Facilitator's Feedback

Moodle advantages over Blackboard:

- Providing individualized feedback easily to all assignments
- Easier to track each student’s activity in class
- When and how often parts of class accessed
- From where students access the course

Blackboard advantages over Moodle

- More polished appearance
 - Better gradebook
 - Threaded discussions easily differentiate between read and unread posts
 - Announcements are more prominently displayed upon entering the course
-

Student Satisfaction:
Did Blackboard/Moodle enhance instruction?

Blackboard:

- 0% strongly agree
- 23.1% somewhat agree
- 23.1% neutral
- 23.1% somewhat disagree
- 30.8% strongly disagree

Moodle:

- 7.1% strongly agree
- 21.4% somewhat agree
- 28.6% neutral
- 28.6% somewhat disagree
- 14.3% strongly disagree

Student Satisfaction:
Received adequate technical assistance?

Blackboard:

- 23.1% strongly agree
- 46.2% somewhat agree
- 23.1% neutral
- 7.7% somewhat disagree

Moodle:

- 42.9% strongly agree
- 28.6% somewhat agree
- 7.1% neutral
- 21.4% somewhat disagree

Student Satisfaction:
Technology-based activities developed problem-solving skills?

Blackboard:

- 0% strongly agree
- 53.8% somewhat agree
- 23.1% neutral
- 7.7% somewhat disagree
- 15.4% strongly disagree

Moodle:

- 21.4% strongly agree
- 0% somewhat agree
- 64.3% neutral
- 0% somewhat disagree
- 14.3% strongly disagree

Student Satisfaction:

Well organized instructional materials?

Blackboard:

- 69.2% strongly agree
- 15.4% somewhat agree
- 7.7% neutral
- 7.7% somewhat disagree

Moodle:

- 57.1% strongly agree
- 35.7% somewhat agree
- 0% neutral
- 7.1% somewhat disagree

Student Satisfaction:

Communication tools: Interaction with classmates?

Blackboard:

- 15.4 significantly enhanced
- 38.5% somewhat enhanced
- 23.1% neutral
- 23.1% somewhat impeded

Moodle:

- 21.4% significantly enhanced
-

- 50.0% somewhat enhanced
- 14.3% neutral
- 14.3% somewhat impeded

Student Satisfaction:

Communication tools: Interaction with instructor?

Blackboard:

- 15.4% significantly enhanced
- 30.8% somewhat enhanced
- 15.4% neutral
- 38.5% somewhat impeded

Moodle:

- 14.3% significantly enhanced
- 57.1% somewhat enhanced
- 21.4% neutral
- 7.1% significantly impeded

Student Satisfaction:

Web-based resources were effective learning tools?

Blackboard:

- 38.5% strongly agree
- 38.5% somewhat agree
- 23.1% neutral

Moodle:

- 35.7% strongly agree
- 57.1% somewhat agree
- 7.1% neutral

Student Satisfaction:

Discussion Boards were easy to use?

Blackboard:

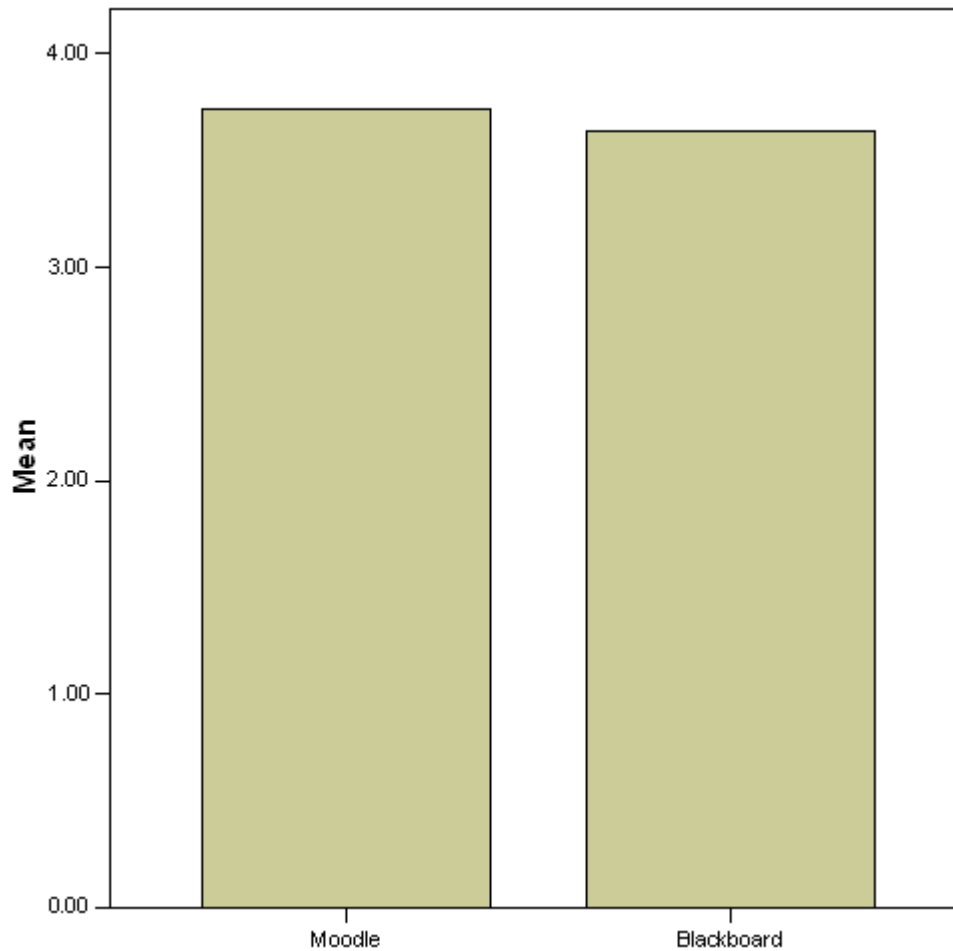
- 69.2% strongly agree
 - 30.8% somewhat agree
-

Moodle:

- 57.1% strongly agree
- 28.6% somewhat agree
- 7.1% neutral

Results:

End of Semester Evaluation Composite Scores



Student Comments

- Great experience
 - I went into this course very concerned whether I could handle an on-line course or not. What I have discovered is how much I have learned from this type of learning format. It forced me to participate a lot more frequently than I believe I would have
-

in a traditional classroom setting. Yes, I did put more time into this class than I might have in a regular classroom but it paid off for me. I learned I can do this!

Student Comments

- It was hard to finish assignments on time because it was hard to find computer access.
- One of the things I didn't like about this class is that I received everyone's responses to anything on my email account. This made me feel like nothing was private. (Moodle student)
- This class was a good learning experience. I am not sure if online classes are for me though. ***Although someone who is shy like myself the online posts were great because I was involved in them, usually I don't participate much in class.***

Student Comments

- I enjoyed the fact that I could log on whenever I wanted. The elimination of my alarm going off at 7:30 was awesome! I enjoyed the material and how it was presented.
- I found it difficult to remember that I had an online class that I had to check in with 3 or more times per week.
- Overall I thought that the online learning experience was good. I felt that I learned a lot and was forced to read the text more than I do for most of my classes.

Student Comments

- One thing that I didn't like was having to post 3 times a week. Sometimes, if I was one of the last people to say anything, I would have to come up with something original to say after there was not much else to add about the subject. It didn't happen too often though. I just like how in a sit down class, when you're having a bad day you can just let others speak up.
- I had a hard time in this class because it was online. I learn better in the classroom with the teacher and students physically present in class.
- I really enjoyed taking an online class and look forward to taking another one this summer!

Student Comments

- I really enjoyed taking this class and I learned a lot and think I will be able to apply this knowledge in the future.
 - I do feel like I would have learned more if it was in a class setting. I sometimes did not have the motivation to "learn" the material. With that said, I also did learn some valuable info. The posts made it easy to express my thoughts and participate with class mates.
-

- When we first started this class I wasn't thrilled about the idea of an online class, however it ended up being alright. Having the class online gave me the time to do the work around my schedule and I really liked having that flexibility.

Developer's Feedback

Moodle advantages over Blackboard:

- Easier to maneuver (fewer “clicks”!)
- Less area monopolized for navigation
- Easier to incorporate multimedia elements
- More tools available (glossary, poll, lesson, journal)
- Track student activity to see which parts of the course are preferred
- Quiz tool scores correctly and provides details on the student's use
- Can be customized to add desired features
- Features are robust
- Survey allows as few as two choices

Developer's Feedback

Blackboard advantages over Moodle:

- Moodle's fixed block at the top wastes screen “real estate”
- Blackboard's features seem more intuitive for beginners
- Built-in survey tool already available
- Readily available “Resources” area for external web sites to be grouped

Moodle or Blackboard for Future Courses?

Developer Satisfaction

- Excellent local support to customize Moodle with more desirable features
- Better results incorporating video in Moodle
- Campus support to explain features and make implementation suggestions
- Flexibility results in some confusion when Moodle features are changed with no warning
- Remarkable array of tools in Moodle—some unavailable in Blackboard
- Not all Blackboard features work like they should: quiz scoring, replicating the course without breaking internal links, etc.

Moodle Customizations

- Essay questions added to the quiz module
 - Surveys added
-

- Gradebook improved with added features
- Date/time programming for topics and/or individual activities
- Quickmail: Allows emailing all or selected students in a course with attachments and a history
- Features added to Moodle's Lesson module
- MyFiles: Students and faculty share files with selected groups
- Return Assignment: Faculty return graded assignments to students

Student Satisfaction:

Would like another (Blackboard/Moodle) course

Blackboard:

- 46.2% strongly or somewhat agree
- 30.8% neutral
- 23.1% somewhat or strongly disagree

Moodle:

- 57.2% strongly or somewhat agree
- 21.4% neutral
- 21.4% somewhat or strongly disagree

Student Satisfaction:

Which do you prefer, Moodle or Blackboard?

No preference – 42.9%

Moodle - 35.7%

Blackboard - 21.4%

*Project Leaders: Dr. Kathy D. Munoz, Professor (kdm1@humboldt.edu)

Joan Van Duzer, Instructional Technologist (joan@humboldt.edu)

What Does One Do with One's Moodle?

When you've installed your new Moodle CMS (or have me do it for you), there are several places you can go to get help. I will cover the list of "Moodle Partners," which are a collection of vendors who work with Moodle owners to give them the best quality education tools and course modules for their needs. Although there is cost involved, it's nice to know that you're not paying the regular monthly licensing or rental fees that you would have had to pay had you subscribed to one of the monolithic systems out there! The materials and vendors I will cover have been evaluated by the Moodle creators and developers, and they are, in most cases, education technicians and online educators, in their own right. This is an assurance to you that they have the best interests of education in mind and not their own profit at your expense.

The Moodle Parters list is growing, and you should take a look: [📁](#)


Steps to Establish Your Moodle Presence

There are four steps to making certain you're using Moodle to its maximum benefit.

1. Choose the proper ISP (Internet Service Provider—your web presence): [📁](#)
 2. Install course packages that will provide the best education for students: [📁](#)
 - a. Get a quality course that you will use. See the course in action before you purchase it for your new Moodle installation: [📁](#)
 - b. Select free course "objects" to insert in your own courses: [📁](#)
 - c. Get money support to run your Moodle courses through government subsidy (yes, they still give out money): [📁](#)
 3. Join Moodle.org to network with other teachers and technical professionals and get the latest scoop about courseware, technical ideas and other free, valuable information.
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